

PUBLIC SERVICE AND
THE VOLUNTARY SPIRIT¹

Service League

1964

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Director, Peace Corps

It is good to see Newt Minow² again, and not in a Wasteland. The soul of our nation may have gone through dull gray years in the past, as Franklin Roosevelt said of the era that preceded his. But these are not gray years now. Things are duller without Newt here. But Washington is no Wasteland.

It is an honor to salute these ten outstanding civil servants who have done so much to make these good years. On them and on other civil servants like them depends the course of the years to come—the character of our government in a time of change.

And I am pleased to be here with the National Civil Service League, because I am convinced this organization occupies a unique position in Washington life. It is the only League I know of in which Washington is not last.

The civil service is always being tested, in peace and in war, by one Administration and then by the next. But the greatest tests come at the low points and at the high points of our national life.

We all recall one low point a decade or so ago when the soul of our nation did go through dull gray years. For the civil service those years were not always dull. Dedicated public servants were under attack, charges were made recklessly, suspicions were spread in the land. People looked for Communists under their beds—and in the PTA.

During those days of wild charges against the civil service and the Foreign Service, I remember hearing about a rabbit that ran away from Washington and was found running scared southward through Virginia. A bird flew down and asked the rabbit why he was running away from Washington.

"They're shooting tigers up there," the rabbit said.

"But you are not a tiger," said the bird.

"I know," replied the rabbit, "but I can't prove it."

So it is a pleasure to pay tribute not just to the award winners tonight but to the entire civil service. You did not run away from Washington. I can't

¹ An address given at the tenth annual Career Service Awards dinner of the National Civil Service League.

² Newton N. Minow, a member of the League's Board of Directors, introduced Shriver as the main speaker at the dinner.

prove that you were never worried some. But you never ran scared, you never ran away. The test is that you are here.

Now, since the President asked me to take on the organization of a war against poverty, I am earning brickbats, too. I hear some people say I have become a czar—but I don't want to be a czar . . . I can remember what happened to the czars. Let me say also that I don't feel like a czar; I don't think I look like a czar; I don't work like a czar; but I can't prove it.

But the hardest test for the civil service, and for all of us, comes not when we are on the defensive—when we are under fire. It comes when it is time to move ahead—when we are called upon to take new action, to do new things, to be creative.

I did not know Washington during the first hundred days of Franklin Roosevelt, but I was fortunate to be here during the twenty-two months of John Kennedy, and to be here these first months of Lyndon Johnson. And I have seen how the civil service is ready to rise to the occasion of these creative periods.

In my own work, I saw how newcomers from the professions and the universities, from labor and business, were welcomed by the oldtimers of the civil service—how they were accepted without resentment or resistance. I am speaking for myself and for many of the people from the worlds outside government whom I helped to find and bring to Washington for President Kennedy in those first months of the so-called "talent hunt." I can say that those of us who joined the government appreciated your welcome and your response. We saw that the hunt can begin at home—that the civil service is a great fund of good talent.

I am thinking of Warren Wiggins, who had lived through the gray years, but who was not dulled by them—who was still ready for a new idea—who responded with a far-reaching plan for the Peace Corps even before there was a task force looking for one. That plan of his became our basic working paper, and he came over from AID to become our Associate Director in charge of all program development and operations.

And there is Howard Greenberg, and Dorothy Jacobsen, Joe Colmen and Nat Davis, Dr. Leo Gehrig, Bill Kelley, Jim Boughton, Ed Nef, Dave Burgess, and there are many others from the civil service and the Foreign Service who have made the Peace Corps what it is.

In the organization of the Peace Corps and now of the poverty program, I have also seen the voluntary principle—the volunteer principle—in action. I have seen it not just in volunteers working overseas but in civil servants working overtime. I have seen it in lights *on* at night, in offices full of people dedi-

cated to getting a job done, ready to work nights and give up weekends. I have seen it in the willingness to work together, to share ideas, to create something that is a joint product—a willingness shown in the Peace Corps and in the poverty program by men and women from practically every major agency or department in our government. What I have seen bears no resemblance to the prototype of the civil servants the critics like to portray.

I am sure that some of the wives and children of the men who lose their weekends to such creative work have a less enthusiastic view of the voluntary spirit. There are, of course, some dangers in volunteering too often. The President already is warning me that he has another job in store for me. If we make headway against Poverty, he assures me that next I can take on Pestilence.

But, seriously, what I have seen convinces me that the civil service is a great and vital part of something even greater, the wider public service which includes all parts and professions of our nation serving the common good. And I am convinced that the volunteer spirit is an essential element in this general public service—that it is now, as it was when de Toqueville studied us over a century ago, the secret of American success.

There are two big points for us to keep in mind:

First, the need for a good relationship between government service and this wider public service that includes the professions and the universities and other private institutions; and, second, the need for volunteers and the voluntary principle.

The relationships between government servants—the civil service proper—and the general public service becomes more complex and more important all the time. From our Peace Corps experience, we can throw light on only a part of this larger problem. We are making progress in developing a good working relationship with universities and private agencies—in developing ways of increasing the contribution to the public service of American higher education.

American colleges and universities and private agencies are built into our program as an integral operating element. Nearly 30 per cent of our overseas programs—about 2,000 of our 7,000 volunteers—are now being professionally supported or actually administered by universities such as Ohio and Wisconsin or groups of universities such as the Indiana Conference on Higher Education; or by private agencies such as CARE, Heifer Project, 4-H Foundation, or the National Grange.

Perhaps most important of all, almost 100 per cent of our training programs take place on the campuses of America, are managed and run by the faculties of our colleges and universities. We have now had training programs

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for over 300 projects in forty-six countries at seventy-seven colleges and universities.

The long-range effect of all this, on both the Peace Corps and on American higher education should be considerable. It places the Peace Corps in the right perspective—it makes the two or three year overseas experience part of the whole educational experience of a volunteer.

But more significant it makes Peace Corps training part of American higher education's program to extend itself to the world. It is this idea of the world—this idea of American education preparing our citizens for service in the world, for citizenship in the world—that now is becoming a reality on our campuses. Congress had this in mind when it decided that world understanding is the object of two of the three purposes of the Peace Corps.

When we began, we looked for those universities that already had overseas experience, or had on the faculty men and women with such experience in particular countries. For example, we arranged for our training for Malaya to take place at Northern Illinois University because we found there one of the few academic experts on Malaya.

When we couldn't find colleges already equipped with past expertise, we went to other colleges and universities with little or no overseas experience. With them we are learning by doing—by working out effective training programs together. We went to them because we believed that our colleges and universities were the proper agencies for Peace Corps training—and because we had confidence that they were ready and able to extend themselves to world understanding and service.

Now, we are taking further steps to deepen and improve our training programs—and to deepen and improve our relationship with American higher education.

We have already started a Senior Year Program which will enlist trainees for overseas programs and train them during the summer between their junior and senior years in college. Then they will have a second training program after their graduation. But during their senior year in college they will know that they are going overseas, they will know the area, probably the country they are going to, and the kind of work they are going to do. If they are to teach English in French-speaking Africa, they will be able to continue study of French and take some courses during their senior year, or get practice in teaching. A trainee who knows that after graduation he is going to spend two years in Latin America speaking almost nothing but Spanish can be expected to study Spanish more seriously during his senior year.

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President Lyndon B. Johnson at a White House reception on April 14 with the 1964 Career Service Award recipients and officials of the National Civil Service League. Seated with the President from left to right: B. Frank White, Regional Commissioner of the Internal Revenue Service, Dallas, Texas; Jean J. Couturier, Executive Director of the National Civil Service League; Rocco C. Siciliano, Vice Chairman of the League Board of Directors; and Bernard L. Gladieux, Chairman of the Board. Standing, left to right: John W. Macy, Jr., Chairman of the U.S. Civil Service Commission; Robert V. Murray, Chief of the Washington, D. C. Metropolitan Police Department.



Crow, Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; U. Alexis Johnson, United States Deputy Ambassador to South Vietnam; William J. Driver, Deputy Administrator of the Veterans Administration; Smith J. DeFrance, Director of the Ames Research Center of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Philip A. Loomis, Jr., General Counsel of the Securities and Exchange Commission; [REDACTED], Executive Secretary, U.S. Intelligence Board, CIA; F. Joachim Weyl, Deputy Chief and Chief Scientist of the Office of Naval Research; and G. Lewis Schmidt, Assistant Director of the United States Information Agency for Administration.

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Thus, by lengthening our training program and building part of it into the curriculum during the trainees' senior year at college, we are getting deeper into the life of the college. But we are ready to go further. We have been meeting with college and university officers in order to build Peace Corps training into the whole college experience—into two or three summer vacations and into the curriculum over a two or three year period.

Last Saturday, in his inaugural address as President of Yale, Kingman Brewster proposed that the Peace Corps "be given no less academic house room than military and naval training." He proposed a Peace Reserve Training Corps.

We welcome this proposal and are ready to work it out with university leaders.

The idea, however, is very different from a military R.O.T.C. Training for Peace Corps service must remain, as the volunteer's service remains, entirely voluntary even after enlistment. We have no general courts martial, or brigs. And Peace Corps training is not and should not be seen as something separate from or peripheral to higher education. Peace Corps service is not a diversion from a person's education or career, as military service too often is. Rather it is a step in his education and in a career of public service.

So the point is not to bring in an outside Peace Corps R.O.T.C., but for the colleges and universities to incorporate Peace Corps training more directly into their regular curriculum and into the whole college experience of the student.

When Peace Corps experience is integrated with college education, a career pattern of public service emerges. Thus higher education, Peace Corps, civil service, or public service in the broad sense become not separate hurdles but a natural progression.

Beyond this, the next big question will be the incorporation of the returning Peace Corps volunteer into the life of the university. About half of the first 645 who have so far returned have resumed studies, most of them in graduate schools. With 3,000 volunteers who will have completed their service by the end of this summer, and with five or six thousand to come back each year thereafter, their return can have a great impact on American higher education and the public service at large.

Let me add that of the first 645 returning volunteers, ninety-seven have already gone into government service, seventy are on the Peace Corps staff itself, in Washington and overseas.

This brings me back to my other main point tonight, the role of volunteers and the voluntary spirit in the public service.

Last month, the President announced that we have produced the world's fastest operational fighter plane, capable of flying across the country in less than two hours. This is a great achievement.

But last month as well, nearly 6,000 Americans applied to join the Peace Corps, more than in any other month since we took in our first volunteer. Since 1961, nearly 100,000 Americans have applied for Peace Corps service. This, too, is a great achievement, for it is evidence of the growing spirit of public service.

Further encouraging evidence was given me today in the report of a sample of 230 returned volunteers who were asked if they would be interested in working in the war on poverty. Four out of five said they were interested. Thirty-nine per cent said they were "extremely interested," and another 43 per cent were "interested." Nearly one-third said they would be ready to work as volunteers in the poverty program in the evenings or weekends on a non-salary basis. When asked their reasons for wanting to do this, the most common answer was that they welcomed the opportunity to serve again—this time in their own country.

These are men and women who have served overseas for two years, who have been through all the frustrations of public service—all the difficulties of being volunteers. They are ready for more.

There is some other good news in this line.

Of the first 645 volunteers to complete their service, over three-quarters replied that they feel they have made a real contribution through their service, and they are moderately or very well satisfied with their experience. Seventy per cent say that, knowing what they now know, if they had it to do all over again, they would volunteer.

All this suggests that the mood of America is changing, that out of our affluent society is emerging something more than swimming pools and air conditioners and bigger and better tailfins. What is emerging is this spirit of public service—a spirit reflected in the words of David Crozier, a Peace Corps volunteer. He wrote home in a letter to his parents, "Should it come to it, I had rather give my life trying to help someone than to have to give my life looking down a gun barrel at them." A short time after those words were written, David Crozier was killed in an airplane crash in Colombia at the age of twenty-two. David Crozier is one of a long line of men who have given themselves in the service of others.

It is this same spirit which must rally behind the war on poverty. For this war cannot be won simply by spending dollars. It must be won by people.

It must be won, first, by the poor people themselves, acting with new hope,

catching some of this spirit. The poor must be active agents in the war on poverty, not just bystanders.

Second, it must be won by community volunteers. Theirs is the responsibility to help mobilize the local resources of the community—to prepare and carry out effective community action programs.

And, third, it must be won by national volunteers—Volunteers for America—who are willing to locate wherever their skills are needed and requested, who are ready to serve their country here at home just as Peace Corps volunteers have served abroad. They will serve in community action programs, teach in deprived schools, assist in the training of the jobless, work in mental hospitals and in mental retardation programs, in migrant labor camps and on Indian reservations.

If Congress establishes this program, I am convinced that Volunteers for America can make as big a contribution at home as that of the Peace Corps abroad.

So there are many ways to attack a Wasteland. Newt Minow showed us one way, and one Wasteland. We are now called to work on this most awful Wasteland of all—the Wasteland of Poverty . . . the human waste of over thirty million Americans.

All of this costs money. But the most expensive thing for us to do about poverty is to do nothing.

The real cost is what we give of ourselves. What these ten distinguished civil servants demonstrate—what the volunteers in the Peace Corps and the response of the American people demonstrate—is that we are ready.

“All this will not be finished in the first one hundred days. Nor will it be finished in the first one thousand days, nor in the life of this Administration, nor even perhaps in our lifetime on this planet.”

But, as John Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson would say: Let us begin.

Government service is an attractive career, and I wouldn't want anyone to sit on the sidelines today when so much goes on in the mainstream. . . . Whether you serve the government abroad—and I assure you it isn't a place for those who prefer the gentle winds—. . . or whether you work here in Washington or any place, this is the most challenging career that could possibly be before any American, and while the compensation may not be as great . . . the rewards are unlimited.

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

As you know, the largest numbers of Federal employees are found in career administrative service. Their role is profoundly important. We look to them to give us long-range continuity and experienced competence in our government.

—NEIL MCELROY
